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SERMON,

PREACHED

In the Parish Church of *Grantham*,
July 12. 1697.

AT THE

Primary Visitation


OF THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

JAMES,
Lord-Bishop of *Lincoln*.

By JOSHUA CLARK, M. A. Re-
ctor of *Somerby*, in *Lincolnshire*.

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A S E R M O N

Preach'd in the Parish Church of Grantham.

II. Cor. 4. 7. *But we have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels, that the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us.*

I mean to Discourse on the former part of the Verse, *We have this Treasure in Earthen Vessels.*

THE Work I have upon my Hands, and the little Time allowed me, will not suffer me to spend much of it upon the Context. Only in order to let us into the Scope and Meaning of the Words, and as necessary to the Design I have propos'd, I must observe to you, That the Treasure here meant is that very valuable one of the Ministry, committed to the Apostles and their Successors; as you may learn from the beginning of the *Chapter*, to the Words I have read to you.

The Apostles had this Treasure committed to them in an eminent manner, by an Immediate Commission and Delegation from the Owner and Dispenser of it; but their Successors have it in an ordinary way and measure, and by a Mediate Commission: But yet both the Former and the Latter in such a way and measure, as are suitable to the Occasions of the Church, and to the Necessities of those for whose sakes they receive it.

I shall say little either of the Gifts and Abilities of the Apostles, or of their way of Administring this *Treasure*; but shall consider it only as We their ordinary Successors are intrusted with it: How we are to behave our selves

A Sermon Preach'd

in the Administring of it, and what the serious Consideration of it should teach us. In order to which I shall say something to these Five General Heads.

I. I shall give some account of this *Treasure*, presenting it to you as briefly as I can.

II. I shall consider how Valuable it is, that so the Reason why the Apostle calls it a *Treasure* may appear.

III. The difficulty of discharging our Trust in Administring and laying out this *Treasure* to the Ends, for which we are made Stewards of it; And that 1. Because it is in it self a Matter of great Difficulty. And 2. much more so to us, *because we have it but in Earthen Vessels*.

IV. What Use We of the Clergy should make of the Serious Consideration of the Worth of this *Treasure*, and the difficulty of Administring it. What it admonishes us of. And *Lastly*, What Use our Brethren of the Laity should make of the same Consideration. What it admonishes them of.

I cannot in any Measure satisfy the Subject I am upon, without saying something to each of these *Topics*, and yet I am sensible every one of them would afford Scope enough for a single Sermon, and some of them for more Sermons than one. And therefore I must not pursue any of them so far as my Thoughts would lead me, but only lightly touch upon Matters, and so leave them to your Meditations to dwell, and exercise themselves upon. And,

I. To give some account of the *Treasure* that the Apostle here speaks of; *It is the Ministry of the Gospel*. The Subject of which is the Infinite Love of God to his Lapsed Creatures, manifested by that most Stupendious Instance, *His giving his only Begotten Son of his own Nature or Substance, to take upon Him our Nature, and in our Nature to live a low and persecuted Life, and to die a Painful and an Infamous Death; and all this that we might not die Eternally*. We, who were the Children of Wrath; who as we are the sinful Progeny of Fall'n Parents, and as we have Corrupted our selves by many Actual Transgressions, and so loaded our selves with a new Personal Guilt, do deserve *that the Vials of God's Wrath should be poured out upon us*.

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in the Parish-Church of Grantham.

The Gospel that we are intrusted with assures us, *That so great is the Love of God to Mankind, that He hath given his well-beloved Son, the Son who never offended Him, to be a Sacrifice for our Sins; that so He might Reconcile us to God, Save us from Eternal Misery, and bring us to a State of endless and most exquisite Happiness.* And, which is no small Addition to all this Grace and Mercy, we are to offer it to Men upon the Reasonable, yea, Desirable Terms of a Lively Faith in Christ, Repentance from dead Works, and a Life Conformable to the Precepts of the Gospel. All this is briefly Expressed by our Blessed Saviour; *God so loved the World, that He gave his only begotten Son,* John 3. 16. *that whosoever Believeth in him, should not perish, but have Everlasting Life.*

These are the Rich Treasures of God's inexhaustible Mercy and Grace, handed out to Men in the Gospel, of which we are made the Stewards or Ministers. Our Office it is, Day after Day, to make a tender of it to all such as are committed to our respective Cures, and to be as helpful to them as we can in their Endeavors to Entitle themselves to a share of it. For so great is the Love of God to Mankind, that he hath not only given his Son to be a Propitiation for their Sins upon very Advantageous terms: But he also wooes and beseeches them by us, his Ministers, to accept of it, that so God and his Rebellious Creatures may be at one again. For as the Apostle speaks, *God hath reconcil'd us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the Ministry of Reconciliation, viz. That God was in Christ, reconciling the World unto Himself, not imputing their Trespases unto them, and hath Committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation.* 2 Cor. 5. 18, 19, 20, 21. Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconcil'd to God. For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin: that he might be made the Righteousness of God in him.

And, in order to our Executing this Great Trust to as good Purpose as may be, we are authoriz'd and commanded to be assitant to our People, in Publick and in Private, and in all States and Conditions of Life, in Adversity, and in Prosperity, in Sicknes, and in Health,
praying

Praying with them and for them, Reading and Expounding the Gospel to them, and Administring to them the Seals of the New Covenant, the Christian Sacraments. Our Duty it is to exhort them all, to Encourage the Good, to reprove Sinners, to support the Weak, to do all we can to convince Gain sayers, and to reduce those that are gone astray. Yea, and if there be any thing else, that is within the Compass of our Power, and within our Commission, conducing to those Noble Ends I have mention'd, it is a part of the *Treasure* here spoken of.

2. Let us next consider how valuable this Ministry is, that so the Reasons why the Apostle calls it a *Treasure* may appear. And these upon a strict Enquiry we should find to be both very many, and very weighty. Indeed, if Men do but desire to live happily in this World, and do but consider what it is they desire, and the way and means to it, they cannot lightly esteem our Ministry. For where are passing by Injuries, doing Good, Justice and Charity, Humility, Patience, Contentment, Temperance, Chastity, Fortitude, Contempt of the World and all other Virtues describ'd with more Life, then in the Books of the New Testament? And where are they pressed home upon Men with greater Earnestness, and more weighty Arguments? And who sees not how necessary these Virtues and Graces are to the Good of the World, what an Ornament and Improvement to Humane Nature, and how much they conduce to the Peace and Quiet of Private Persons, and of Societies? Alas! What a Poor Sneaking Creature is Man without Fortitude, and a mind rais'd above the World! How miserable without Patience and Contentment! What a Bruit without Temperance and Chastity! What an Insolent bubble without Humility! How useless and even Good for nothing without Charity! What a Common Plague and a Disturbance without Justice and Philanthropy! How full of Rapine and Bloodshed would the World be without mutual forbearance and passing by Injuries! Why! These and such like useful Virtues are a Great part of the Christian Ethicks.

Add to this, that the Gospel Commands us to Love God above all things, with all our Hearts and Souls, and Might, and

and Strength, to Worship and Obey him, to trust in, and depend upon him. These and all other Duties of Piety, it enforces with most Persuasive motives. For it Assures us, *God is a Being of Infinite Majesty and Perfection, that He made us and all the World, and that He upholds us and all things else by the Word of His Power.* I confess, Philosophy teaches us all this, or most of it: But most plainly and fully are we taught it in the Holy Scriptures. And then they likewise acquaint us with Arguments of another Nature, that do still more Powerfully enforce the whole of our Duty towards God. They assure us, *That Man was at first Created in a State of Innocence: But that He fell from God by Willful sin, and so became liable to His Eternal Displeasure: But that God of his Infinite Mercy hath redeem'd us, from that miserable Estate by the Death of his Son.* And what Reason have we then to *Love Him, since He first Loved us!* And not only to Love Him, but likewise to fear to offend Him, partly from an Ingenuous Principle of Gratitude, and partly lest so much Mercy abus'd should turn into Fury; To Worship and Obey Him! To trust in and depend upon Him!

Now how much it conduces to the Happiness of our Lives, to be thus affected towards God, need not be prov'd to such as believe their being and well being, even in this World, do so far depend upon his Pleasure, that they cannot be happy without Him.

Besides, the Gospel which we Preach doth most plainly and pressingly injoyn Obedience to Magistrates; the which is absolutely necessary to the Peace of Mankind. It carries the Principles of Loyalty as high as is conducing to the Good of the World: And doth not give the least Encouragement to Subjects to dispute the Titles of Princes: *But to submit to every Ordinance of Man for the Lords sake.* And who sees not how much this Doctrine conduces to the Peace and Quiet of the World, and what Disturbances, and Endless confusion the contrary would occasion.

From what hath been said, I hope, it doth appear how Instrumental the Gospel is in promoting our Welfare even in this Life, whilst it teaches such Rules and Measures to Govern our selves by, as are very much for our Temporal Happiness. And I may add, it conduces very much to the Perfecting of our Natures too, since the same Rules Learn'd and

A Sermon Preach'd

Practis'd, will raise us out of that common sink into which we are fall'n, and make us look like Reasonable Creatures. So that if the establishing of such Rules in the World as are for the Peace and Quiet of it, and for the Happiness of Mens Lives, and the forming of their Manners after the Highest Model of Perfection, they are for the present capable of, be Valuable, then is our Ministry so; and consequently we see what Reason the Apostle hath to call it a *Treasure*.

But then, if we add to all this that Consideration of Infinite moment which the Apostle seems here to intend; I mean the Value of our most Precious Souls; which must Live for ever, either in Inconceivable Happiness or Misery; and that the Gospel alone Teaches us the certain way to escape the one and obtain the other, this gives us such an *Idea* of the worth of our Ministry, as overfills our Labouring Thoughts, and is by no means to be measur'd by our shallow way of comprehending. But altho' this be of the far Greatest moment to us, and such as might very well entertain our Meditations much longer, yet have I not time upon this occasion to enlarge upon it. And I hope, I may at the present be excus'd from so doing; because as it is the most Weighty, so it is the most Common Topic of Discourse. And so much for the Second General, *The exceeding Great Value of our Ministry, which is the Reason why the Apostle Calls it a Treasure*. I now proceed to the Third, *Viz. The Difficulty of Discharging our trust in laying out this Treasure to the Ends, for which we are made Stewards of it*. And that,

I. *Because it is in it self a matter of Great Difficulty*. This the Apostle supposes, else what need he take Notice of our having it in *Earthen Vessels*, and that to this End, *That the Excellency of the Power may be of God, and not of us*. Were it easily kept, any Vessels were strong enough for that Purpose. Were our Duty easily discharg'd, as low Faculties, and as weak Abilities as ours are, would be sufficient for it, without any Extraordinary Divine Assistance. I shall therefore endeavour to shew that indeed the Fulfilling of our Ministry is in it self a Matter of Great Difficulty. I do not pretend to speak of all the Difficulties that do every way Accompany, or attend our Office, I have not time

time for that, and therefore must content my self with saying enough, altho' not all that might be said to this purpose. I shall reduce what I would say under these Three Heads. 1. *Reading Divine Service.* 2. *Preaching.* And 3. *Recommending our Labours to our People by a suitable Behaviour.* These are Duties of the greatest Importance, are daily incumbent upon us, and to acquit our selves well in the performance of them is no easie Matter. And therefore I have singled them out at this time, not only as Mediums whereby to prove how hard our Task is; but also in order to awaken our diligence and care about them.

I am not unensible that the first of them is commonly look'd upon as a Matter of little or no difficulty. Any Man that can but Read, is thought to have Skill enough to read Prayers: And perhaps its being look'd upon to be so easie is the reason why it is not always so well minded as it ought to be; and why the Office of a Reader is by some so little esteem'd. But there is a great difference between Reading, and Reading well. By Reading well I do not mean either meerly or chiefly true Reading; but such Reading as gives the Words of Weight in the Prayers their due *Emphasis*; and consequently hath a tendency to move those that joyn at them to lift up their Hearts to God suitably to what's desir'd; and to beget in Peoples Minds a Veneration and Esteem for the Sacred Offices in proportion to their worth and value. 'Tis certain he that reads Prayers hath a very great Command over the Peoples Devotion; yea and that, where this is ordinarily taken care of, the Credit of our Liturgy is rais'd, even with many of those that had once but a mean Opinion of it, above all other Forms and Methods of Prayer; and much more about Praying without any Form or Method. And how can it be otherwise, when the Prayers themselves are in every respect so very valuable? Consider the Matter of them; Are they not suited to the common Necessities of Christians? Do not all of us find we want either for our selves or others, what we Pray for by these Forms? Consider the Expressions, are they not Pertinent and Weighty, and admirably express our Desires? Consider the Stile, is it not Grave and yet very Affecting? Take the whole together, and I believe we shall not find any other Prayers of Composure meerly Hu-

A Sermon Preach'd

mane, better fitted for a Pious and Wise Christians Publick Devotions: Scarce any that do equally assist and bear up the Soul in her highest flights of Publick Intercession.

Let us, my Brethren, whose Office it is to perform this Principal part of Divine Service, have a Care we do not make them fall short of their Genuine usefulness, by a Flat, a Careless, or a Cursory Reading. Let us make it evident we Love, and are our selves affected with what we read, and that will be a very great help towards the Affecting of others. Let us have a Care that by our haste we do not give People too great cause to suspect our desire is rather to get our Task done, then to do our Duty. But I must pursue this Matter no further, I find I am insensibly gone off from my Purpose, and am got from Argument to Exhortation.

If we consider, we shall find the right discharging this Part of our Duty is not without it's Difficulties. For it requires that we well consider and study over, if not every Expression in the Liturgy, at the least the Matter of each Prayer, and that we be aware how every thing ought to be pronounc'd. And most of all that we watch over our Thoughts so as they may wander, as little as is possible, while we are performing the sacred Offices. For besides, that we have no great Reason to hope that God will regard our Prayers, when we our selves do not, and so as to our own Particulars we shall loose our Labour, there is a further and more General Evil is apt to follow from our wandering thoughts: Our Pronunciation will be apt to alter, and cease to be so edifying; and 'tis well if we be not Noted of Heedlessness, and Offence taken by such of the Congregation as are not apt to make us any Great Allowances for Humane frailty. When I had finished this Discourse, upon reviewing it, I was afraid some would think I might have spar'd almost all the Pains I have been at upon this Part of it. But the excellent Advice of our Right Reverend *Diocesan*, presently after coming to my Hands, hath eas'd me of all scruple of such a Nature, and hath confirm'd me in a contrary Opinion; Since his Lordship hath thought it necessary to Recommend this part of our Duty to our serious Care: And in order to bind it the faster upon us, puts us in Mind of the Promise we made relating hereto, when we first entred upon the Ministry. The Se-

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cond Particular under the Third General, that I have propos'd to say something to is Preaching. By which I do not barely mean what is publickly delivered from the Pulpit, tho that alone in Vulgar speaking hath engross'd the Name of Preaching : But the whole of that Office which takes in Instruction, Reproof and Exhortation, whither in Publick or in Private. Publick Instruction, I might shew to be a matter attended with many and great Difficulties But I have only time to mention a few of them. In the first place, Care is to be taken that our Discourses be neither too Low, nor too Lofty for our Hearers. And our Task is, in this respect, the harder, because many times what is but suitable to the Capacities of one part of our Auditory, is so plain as to be Nauseated by the other. How to behave our selves in this Case deserves our Care and Study. I am apt to think our safest way is most to consult the Edification of the more Ignorant part of our People ; Partly because they most want Instruction, and Partly because they can receive no Benefit by what is above their reach : Whereas no Sermons are so plain, but that the most Knowing may Learn something from them : Or however, have something brought to their Remembrance that they did not think of.

Abstruse Speculative Points will also sometimes fall under our Consideration. And they are to be treated of with the greatest Caution. For we shall find it a hard matter in speaking of them, not to do more hurt then good. We are (and not without Cause) Commanded by His Majesty in his Directions, to avoid all New Terms in explaining the Doctrine of the Trinity, and to confine our selves to such ways of Expression, as have been commonly us'd in the Church. The same Rule ought in Reason to be observ'd about all other Points of Difficulty. For certainly it is a very great Piece of Presumption for any Man to attempt in Publick, either from the Pulpit or the Press better Terms of Expression, and better ways of Explication then the Church could ever yet find out. If any thing New in matters of this Nature be suffered to go abroad, it ought first to be well weigh'd and Established by the Authority of the Church.

Our Task in ordinary Teaching would be more Easy and to much better Purpose, could we but once settle amongst us a profitable way of Catechising ; the want of which hath been too sadly experienc'd, and hath been often complain'd of. To

A Sermon Preach'd

this all grant, it is not enough to hear Children say their Catechisms, and I doubt it is likewise insufficient to expound meerly in a continued Discourse. It seems necessary that we confer with Young Persons after they come to Years of Discretion and Judgment, often asking them Questions, and hearing them Answer in Words of their own. This would oblige them to mind what we say to them, and very much fix things in their Memories. Likewise it would give us Opportunities of finding out their Proficiency in Spiritual Knowledge, and of setting them right, where they have wrong Notions. Whereas Discourse upon a Head as long as you please, and in the Plainest Terms and Method you can invent, still you are not sure they understand you, no, nor that they have minded what you have been saying. And I believe if, after such a Discourse, you fall to examining of them unexpectedly, scarce one in Ten will give you satisfaction.

But this, being to many a New Method, will never be brought to pass to any good Purpose, unless Authority shall think good to make it a General Duty ; and order the matter so, as that both Ministers and People may look upon it to be so. Probably the Novelty of the Proposal may make some Men startle at it at the first as an Imposition : But yet, I am perswaded upon Tryal it would be found of greater Advantage to our People, and more easy both to them and us, than ordinary Teaching ; and be an effectual means, if managed with a becoming gravity and seriousness, to restore the Clergy to, what is almost lost, the Love of their Flocks, and consequently to a just Authority over them ; I say, *The Love of their Flocks and Consequently a just Authority over them.* For I think at this time of Day, 'tis in vain for Private Ministers to pretend to much Authority over their People, unless they can gain their Love. I doubt not, but every Man that considers will easily allow the Advantage of Personal Conference this way, to be far beyond that of ordinary Teaching. For in General Discourses that equally concern all, no Man is sensible of any Particular kindness intended towards himself : Whereas 'tis otherways where People are singled out for Personal Instruction and Exhortation. There they are easily made sensible of the Kindness meant to them in Particular. And the tender Age of the Persons to be conferr'd with being most Apt to receive Impressions of this Nature, I am perswaded

swaded it were easy by this Method ordinarily to beget in them such Inclinations towards their Spiritual Guides, as would scarce ever wear off in the after parts of their Lives. But let what I have said on this Subject be understood, as meant with an entire Submission to better Judgments, and especially to the Judgment of my Superiors.

The two remaining parts of Preaching are Reproof and Exhortation. I put them together for quicker dispatch; and the rather because the Difficulties about them are much what the same. And indeed they are very great, whither we have occasion to perform them in Publick or in Private. To the faithful and due discharging of them, there are necessary Great Courage, Prudence and Temper. A great many Rules have been laid down by several about this part of our Office: I beg leave to mention two. 1. That we manage our selves and our Discourses so, as may effectually convince those we deal with, that what we say to them proceeds, not from a busy humour, but from a Sence of Duty. 2. That we have no selfish design upon them; especially that we do not intend to affront or reproach, but to serve them. *Aristotle* advises his Orator to Cherish the Good will of his Hearers, and in order to it to make them sensible of his Good will to them. Now what doth it more effectually, then when it is evident we really desire their Welfare. If we would speak up to the *Emphasis* of the *Hebrew Idiom* * to the Heart, we must speak from the Heart. And in order to the making our People sensible we do so, we must be careful to lay the greatest stress upon the most concerning Truths, and always to deliver them with an Air of Kindness, and without any appearing Affectation of fine Language. Such kind of Language is very winning when it is Natural and Unforc'd, otherwise it prejudices a Cause. King *Charles* the I. Of Blessed Memory is said to have pronounc'd the very Learned *Dr. Hammond*, the most Natural Orator he ever heard. A very advantageous Character from so great a Judge. To look as like such Orators as may be, it should be our Study. For certainly, such kind of Rhetorick will influence Men far beyond the Force of plain Tropes and Curious Figures, of gentle Cadences and Artful Periods. And indeed, considering the great Aversion Men generally have to Discourses of this Nature, they had need be delivered with the utmost advantage they are capable of. For what shall perswade Men to break off their Evil Customs? To forsake

Rhetor ad Alex. Cap. 30.

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Dr. Fell's Life of Dr. Ham. p. 24.

forſake thoſe ſins they have long liv'd in? Nay, what ſhall perſwade them to hear and bear with Patience our Diſcourſes of ſuch a tendency? It is in vain to expect this from them, unleſs we can convince them we are Acting the Part of an Honelt Phyſitian, who intends his Patients Health, even when he gives him Phyſick that makes him Sick. But alas! Our work in this reſpect is much harder than that of the Phyſicians for the Body. Their Patients are for the moſt part far more eaſily dealt with than ours, are much more perſwadable, and do more eaſily ſubmit to their ſevere Rules for the Health of their Bodies, then ours do for the Health, for the Eternal Happineſs of their Souls.

To the Third Heads I have mention'd, we may reduce thoſe difficult Parts of our Office which reſpect troubled Minds, Death-bed Penitents, and the reducing of ſuch as have gone aſtray. The two firſt of theſe are well known to be Caſes, that often puzzle the moſt prudent Spiritual Guides.

And as to the laſt of them; It alſo is our indiſpenſible Duty, where we have not Cauſe utterly to deſpair of ſucceſs. But how ſhall we go about it, when it is a very difficult thing to perſwade them to give us the hearing; and much more to give us a fair hearing. *St. auſtin* tells us, *That the Donatiſts would allow none to be Chriſtians but themſelves.* And do not thoſe of the *Church of Rome* on the one hand, and the greateſt part of our *Proteſtant Diſſenters* on the other, carry it much what after the ſame Manner towards all that differ from them. The Former calling themſelves *Catholicks*, Excluſively of us and of all others, not of their Communion; *And the latter aſſuming to themſelves the Title of the Good People, and the Godly Party?* And do not both of them agree in this, that they deny our Call to the Miniſtery, and our having any Authority over them? And muſt it not needs be a hard matter to win People, that do not ſo much as look upon themſelves to be oblig'd to regard what we ſay? But rather to beware of us as a dangerous ſort of Men. And yet even this we muſt endeavour ſo long as we have any ſlender Hopes of Succeſs. There are other great Difficulties in the performing this part of our Office, but I paſs them over, and haſten to the Third Particular, *The Difficulty of recommending our Labours effectually to our People by a ſuitable behaviour.* And this takes in *Example and Converſation.* As to the Former of theſe, how neceſſary the Good Lives
of

Contra Ep.
PammenLib.
Cap. 2. Vol. 7.
Pag. 7 Ed. Lov.

of those that minister about holy things, are, hath been understood by Men of most Communion. It is remarkable to this Purpose what *Hist. Ref. P. 2.* the now Right Reverend Bp. of Sarum tells us concerning a Consultation in Queen Mary's Reign, which way to deal with, and reduce those they call'd Hereticks. *Gardiner*, according to his spiteful and savage Nature, was for Cruelty: But *Cardinal Pool* by far the more generous and better temper'd Person, was for a quite different Method. Instead of Severity towards Hereticks, he was for carrying on a strict Reformation of the Lives of the Clergy. Having observ'd that in every Country of Christendome, the best and wisest Men acknowledged that the Scandals and Ignorance of the Clergy, had given the Rise to Heresie. Pope *Marcellus* and his Friends were of the same Mind, as to the necessity of a Reformation. Yea, the Council of Trent, as corrupt as it was, hath set forth a great many Canons about it; altho, as Father *Paul* observes, they also found out Means to Evacuate all the Rules they gave, so far as they contradicted their Secular Interest, and tended to retrench the Papal Authority. Now what these Men thought would so much avail to the introducing of Error, will no less conduce to the upholding of Truth; and where there is occasion for it, is equally requir'd to it. For there are but a few Men that can weigh Arguments, and but a few that cannot consider Example. So that it is almost, if not altogether, as necessary to the edifying of our People, that we live well, as that we preach well. And indeed who will believe us, if we do not live as if we believ'd our selves, I am far from thinking that the ill Life of a Preacher is a solid Argument against his Rules of good Life: But yet it is an Argument that goes a great way to render them ineffectual. The *Cynick* was angry with Orators for arguing about just and right, while they themselves did not at all do what was right. *Diog. Laer. de vit. Diog. P. 382.* τα δὲ ἴδια μεταῖσι συδακνῆσαι λέγειν περὶ τῶν δὲ ἰδίων. And there are few Men that are not of his Mind. But then, which makes it still more difficult to acquit our selves in this respect, to the satisfaction of our People, they will make us very little Allowance for unavoidable Weaknesses. And therefore, if to depraved Nature it be a hard matter to set a good Example; it must needs be much harder for us, of whom so much is required, to set such an Example, as will be allow'd to be good.

If any of us be overtaken with a Fault what a Business is made of it! And how is every circumstance aggravated with-
out

out Charity? And beyond Reason? Every little Spot in our Coat is soon espy'd, and looks as ill as a great Stain in another Colour. But if any of us happen to be overtaken with a Scandalous Crime what a Blemish is it, in the Opinion of many, to almost the whole Order! What unequal Constructions are made of it to the Prejudice of our very Calling! And what an Encouragement is it made to Libertinism!

Nor have I yet laid out the whole of this Difficulty, it must not only be our daily care to abstain from Evil, but also from the Appearance of Evil. There are a great many Freedoms Innocent in themselves that other Men may, but we must not take. And many Advantages Honest in themselves that they may take, but we must forego. St. *Augustine*, in his Sermon to the People of *Hippo*, concerning the Life and Manners of his Clergy tells them in a certain Case there mention'd. He was careful so to Act as not only to be Innocent, but that no offence might be taken. And his Reason he expresses in these Words. *Scio enim quantum vobis sit necessaria Fama mea: nam mihi sufficit Conscientia mea.* His meaning is, that altho' a good Conscience, an assurance in his own Mind, that he had not done amiss were enough for his own satisfaction, yet more was necessary for them, *viz.* So to Act as was most likely to prevent any mistakes, they might be in danger of making about his Carriage in that matter; and even to cut off occasion from such as might probably seek occasion, so as his Good Name might not suffer even by unjust Detraction.

As to Conversation, it is of great use to render our Persons, and consequently our Labours acceptable. *Plutarch* tells us, *In the Life of Cato minor that his Gravity, or rather Stiffness was such that he would scarce smile.* And there was a time when an *Austere* look and mean, a Reverend Beard and seldom speaking went a great deal further, to make a Man be look'd upon to be Wise and Virtuous, then they will do now. Gravity alone is far from recommending any Person now adays to wise Men, and with a great many it stands in need of a good Stock of Learning and Vertue to recommend it. And yet on the other hand, there is an extravagant Vanity and Lightness in Con-
versing, that doth by no means become our Calling. To Temper these together, or rather to keep the due Mean, is a Matter of no small Difficulty.

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There are a great many other social Graces, as Affability, Cheerfulness, a readiness to serve, and the like; which are to real worth and goodness, what fine Cloaths are to the Body, viz. for Ornament. I have not time to lay down any Rules about this Matter, nor durst I undertake it if I had: For I look upon it to be a very difficult thing to do it well, and the rather because what looks very agreeable and taking in one Man, will by no means do in another. Every Man's Observation will best inform him what sort of behaviour becomes him: And certainly none should look upon it as a trivial matter, and below their care and minding; since for want of an agreeable Conversation, we may daily observe great Virtues and great Abilities rendr'd almost useless. And Men that have a dexterity this way, do far out-do those that want it, altho' they have on other accounts twice their worth and merit. And thus have I, as briefly as I could, touch'd upon some few of the many difficulties that do attend the faithful Discharge of our Priestly Office: Which do, in the first place, prove it to be in it self a matter of great difficulty. But then,

2. It must still be much harder to us because, as the Apostle here speaks, *we have it but in Earthen Vessels*; or, as it may be translated, in *Vessels of Shell*. Take which rendring you please. I presume the Apostle means by it, what the word very well represents, viz. the brittleness and frailty of our lapsed Natures: All those Weaknesses both of Mind and Body, which the unhappy fall of our first Parents hath brought on their Posterity. But having said so much of the difficulty of our Duty in it self, to shew how very hard it must needs be to those that are of like passions with other Men; I need say nothing to such as are acquainted with, and consider their own daily Infirmities: And therefore let thus much suffice for the third general Head, viz. The difficulty of discharging our Trust in administering and laying out this Treasure to the Ends, for which we are made Stewards of it.

I now proceed to the

4th. Which is, to shew of what use to us of the Clergy, the consideration of the worth of this Treasure, and the difficulty of Administring it should be. What it admonishes us of.

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But I presume it is obvious to the meanest Capacities, with how little a Turn all that I have hitherto said, especially upon the last General, may serve for Application to us: and therefore altho' I be not long on this Head, I hope I shall not be censur'd for that fault, which hath been often charged upon Sermons preach'd on such Occasions as this, *viz.* That they speak largely of the Duty of our People, but say very little concerning our own. Since the Duty of Clergy-men hath hitherto been the greatest part of my Subject. And yet in order to awaken our Care, and excite our Diligence, as much as I can, give me leave to make two or three Inferences.

1. The Dignity of our Calling, and the Value of the *Treasure* committed to us, teach us not to suffer our selves to be despised. *Let no Man despise thee*, says the Apostle to *Titus*, Chap. 2. 15. But it will be a hard matter for us to secure our selves from Contempt in these days of *Liberinism*, wherein sacred Persons and things are so little regarded. However, my *Brethren*, let us be so careful of our Deportment, as to do nothing that may either justly expose our selves, or, through the false reasonings of Men, reflect upon our Ministry.

2. If the *Treasure* committed to us be so precious, and it be so hard a matter to administer it to its proper ends; difficult in it self, and much more so to us, who have it but in *Earthen Vessels*; then let us continually depend upon God for success, and daily pray to him for Assistance. When we consider the great Work we have upon our Hands, and the little strength we have to perform it, together with the many Infirmities we are subject to, our Hearts are ready to fail us. And we are ready to cry out in the Words of the *Apostle*, *Who is sufficient for these things?* But we know who hath promised to be with us always, even unto the end of the World: And we doubt not but he will make good his Word. Let us therefore look up to him, praying earnestly for the Assistance of the Holy Spirit; and he will enable us in some good measure to do our Duty, and what he doth enable us to do, he will graciously accept of.

3. Let the same *Considerations* awaken us to the utmost diligence and care in the discharge of our Duty. We have

have heard; it is a *Treasure* which we have in *Earthens Vessels*, of what vast moment our Office is, that it hath a tendency to promote the peace and happiness of the *VWorld*, the forming of Mens Minds to all that's good and vertuous, and to the everlasting happiness of Souls, for the which the Son of God hath shed his most precious Blood. And shall we do the work of the Lord negligently? Shall we go about such a noble Employment, as if it was trivial and unconcerning? We have a task upon our hands, that requires all our skill, courage and industry to do it well: Let us therefore stir up the Gift of God that is in us. Let us labour in the Word and Doctrine, like Men that believe we must be accountable for every Soul in our respective Parishes: So as at that day when the great Bishop of Souls shall reckon with us, we may give up our accounts with joy, and not with grief. We are *Gods Watch-men*, set to watch over his Flock; and what he says to the Prophet *Ezekiel*, Chap. 3. 18, doth also concern us; *When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked Man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hands. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul.* As therefore we would not have the Souls of our People to answer for, let us take heed to our selves, and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made us Overseers, to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

And then let us endeavour to enforce our Exhortations with Example. Let us practise the Rules we give; going before our Flocks in good Works: That so we may convince them by our Lives, we take that to be indeed the best way of Living, which we recommend to them in our Preaching. And that such of the Laity, as are our Friends, may have wherewith to stop the mouths of our Accusers. As bad as the times are, we have some very Hearty Friends amongst the Laity, who esteem us very highly in love for our work sake, and are ready to vindicate us from all unjust imputations; Let us have such a sense of their Civility and Kindness to us, as to behave our selves so inoffensively, that they may

not be asham'd to have taken our Parts. St. *Augustine's* words to this purpose in the forecited Sermon, deserve our Regard : *Qui nos amant, querunt quod laudent in nobis, Qui autem nos oderunt detrahunt nobis: nos autem in utroq; medio constituti, adjuvante Domino Deo nostro, & vitam & famam nostram sic custodire debemus, ut non erubescant de detractoribus Laudatores.* They that love us are desirous to find what they may commend in us : They that hate us do detract from us. Now we being plac'd betwixt these two different sorts of men, ought by the help of God so to watch over our Lives and our Reputations, that those that detract from us may not have wherewith to put those that commend us to the Blush.

Lastly, We may learn from what hath been said, to give God the Glory of the Success of our Labours. This seems to be the use that the Apostle makes in the latter part of the Verse, *that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.* The intended Sense may be, that God had chosen weak Men to preach the Gospel, that so it might be evident, the glorious success it was to have in the VWorld would be of God, and consequently be a means to convince Unbelievers : But may they not also very well be accommodated to the Matter I am speaking of : The Men that God hath committed this great and difficult Trust to, are subject to all the Infirmities of a depraved Nature, and therefore they have reason to give God the glory of their Success. VWherefore after we have laboured as earnestly in Gods Vineyard, as if all were to come from our selves, and as if the glory of all the good we hope to do, were to redound to our selves, let us ascribe our success wholly unto God, saying in the words of this Apostle, in the Chap. before my Text, *v. 5, 6. We are not sufficient of our selves, to think any thing as of our selves: but our sufficiency is of God, who hath made us Ministers of the New Testament.* I am now come to the

5th and last general Head of Discourse, VWhat use our Brethren of the Laity should make of the Consideration of the value of the Treasure committed to us, and of the difficulty of Administring it to the ends, for which we have received it : You have heard me, my Brethren, in effect all this while pleading for you with the Clergy, whilst I have been laying before them the value of that *Treasure*, with

with which for your sakes they are intrusted, together with the difficulty and necessity of administering it aright. And now let me beg your leave a little to argue with you, from the same Topicks, on their behalf. I might multiply Inferences from the Text and from the Discourse you have heard, that do concern your conduct and behaviour with regard to us. But I would not be over-tedious, and therefore shall only recommend to you three things;

1. Not to grudge our Maintenance. 2. To make us reasonable and charitable Allowances for our Infirmities. And 3. To make our work as easie and successful as you can, by a ready conformity.

To speak to the first of these, That you do not grudge our Maintenance, I come very unwillingly. I am sure I never in my whole life said so much of it from the Pulpit, as I shall do now: But have always avoided it as much as I could, because it is liable to be censur'd, as a selfish pleading of our own Cause. But the Subject I am upon doth so naturally lead to it, that I cannot now pass it by without manifest Unfaithfulness; and I wish there were not too great Cause for Discourses of this nature.

The *Treasure* we have is in *Earthen Vessels*. We carry about us Tabernacles of Clay, Mortal Bodies that want the same natural Supplies that yours do: And therefore care must be taken that we may receive them on one hand or other, otherwise we shall not be long amongst you, and have time and leisure convenient for the discharging of our Office. Either we must sadly neglect it, whilst we are forced to seek our Bread by Secular Cares: or else we must starve, and so be taken from you. Indeed if we were to be maintained wholly at your proper Charges, it were but reasonable, that every one of you should contribute cheerfully, according to his ability. For, as St. Paul exhortates the Matter, *if we have sown unto you spiritual things, would it be a great thing if we should reap your carnal things?* But that is far from being the case. Those of the Clergy, whose maintenance is by Tithes, or by settled Stipends, both which together do make up almost the whole Body, do not receive a Farthing at the expence of the People. For when you pay your Tithes, you give us nothing that was yours before,

1. Cor. 9. 11.

before, nor that ever, that you know of, belong'd to any of your Ancestors: And therefore you have no reason to grudge the parting with it. We have the Grant of early Christians, Immemorial Prescription, and, which confirm both these, repeated Acts of Parliament on our side. Any of which are an indisputable Title, and altogether as good a Title as any Man hath to his Estate. And since the first settling of Tithes upon the respective Churches, the several Fees, out of which they are paid, have been transmitted from one to another, without any right, or so much as a pretence to pass over the Tithes. Are you Landlords? you or your Ancestors at the first purchasing bought not the Tithes. Are you Tenants? You do not Rent it. Were the former the Case, the Price, and were the latter, the Rent, would be much higher than either is. And shall any Man think much to set us out what costs him nothing? What is our own? Shall any Man, that without any charge to himself may enjoy the benefit of our Labours, grudge us that which Holy Men have bequeath'd to us many Ages ago? We ask you nothing for all our pains, and God forbid, but that you should cheerfully set us out what others have given us.

This being said, it will be but a poor shift to alledge we cannot produce a Divine VVarrant for Tithe. That is a controversy that I cannot now enter into: Nor is there any great need for it; since we cannot produce an undoubted Divine VVarrant for the paying of every man his own. And if the Tithes be not ours, I would gladly know whose they are, or what right any Man hath to his Estate. But some may say, if God have not by his expresse command reserved Tithes for his own Tribe, it is no sacrilege to detain them. Suppose we should grant it is not, yet if it have in it all the Evil of Cozenage and Theft, is not that Crime enough? But why no sacrilege to detain Tithes, altho' we should grant God hath not by his Expresse command reserved them. Is nothing Gods but what He himself hath reserv'd in Expresse terms? Yes certainly, what Men have voluntarily devoted to his Service. Why undoubtedly, this Right God hath to Tithes. And who then shall dare to invade his Property? *Ananias* might have chosen whether he would have sold his Land

Land or not : And after it was sold he might have chosen whether or no he would have set over the Price to supply the then extraordinary occasions of the Church. For saith the Apostle to him , *Whiles it remained, was it not thine own ?* Acts 5. 4.
And after it was sold was it not in thine own Power ? And yet after it was sold , and the Price made over to God, he himself might not touch it. For he is charg'd not only with *Lying to the Holy Ghost* : but also with *keeping back part of the Price*, namely, after the whole was devoted.

I think it is sometimes objected, that the Patrimony of the Church is unequally divided, and even this some may probably make a secret Encouragement to detain from those whom they suppose to have too great a share. But what is it to any Man how the Church's Patrimony is divided, that knows he himself hath no right to it ? This is just such a Reason for detaining of Tithes, as Thieves use to give for their robbing of rich Men. Nor is the equality so often pleaded for either reasonable or convenient. There are and must be different Orders in the Church ; and accordingly the Expences , and the Income to maintain those Expences , must be different. And even amongst Men of the same Order 'tis fit there should be a difference of Income, because some are called to more chargeable employments than others are : And it is necessary these should be Men of extraordinary Learning to maintain the Truth, and in order thereunto, such whom God hath qualified for it must have greater helps to Study, which are very expensive ; and require a larger portion of the Church's Patrimony.

I think no Man can object that the generality of the Clergy have too large a maintenance, who considers how expensive their Education and their way of Living commonly are, and must needs be. And that the richer sort of Tradesmen have a better clear Income than Clergymen commonly have ; that they need not live after such an expensive manner as Clergymen necessarily must, it being expected that these do expend more largely on several accounts than the other ; especially on the score of Charity. And as a Consequence hereof, They, i.e. Tradesmen, do commonly provide better for their Families than Clergymen do.

Lib. de
Sacerd. Hon.
pag. 642, &c.

To what hath been said on this Head, give me leave to add, that they who have written of these matters, do assure us that the Levitical Priesthood had a much larger portion, than the Evangelical Priesthood hath. And yet surely our Pains are much more wearisome than theirs were; Our Employment's Spiritual, and therefore more noble than theirs under the carnal Dispensation; And our Requisites to study far more expensive. And yet it is remarkable what *Philo Judæus* tells us of the cheerfulness of their People in giving. He first proves how large the Portion of their Priesthood was from their manifold Tithes and Offerings, and the Populousness of their Country compar'd together. Thence he goes on to shew that their Law equals the Priesthood in this respect, even to the Kingly Office; since it commands *Tribute to be paid them as unto Kings; but with this difference, that Kings receive theirs from their People against their wills, and their Collectors are hated as common Pests, and their Subjects are always making excuses, why they cannot pay at the day appointed. But the Jews paid their Priests joyfully and unasked, preventing the askers, and the appointed days of payment, believing themselves to receive and not to give; adding good wishes or acclamations, and all this was done so spontaneously and diligently, as exceeded all that could be said to express it.* It will seem strange to some of you, to hear the Jewish Priesthood in any respect equalled to the Kingly Office. But I have all along pursu'd, or rather fall'n below the Sense of the Author, there being an Emphasis or Air in the Greek, that my English will scarce reach. Indeed he speaks very magnificently of their Priesthood, throughout the whole Book, and even glories in the esteem they had of it. But I must not enlarge any further upon what he says. The Book is very short, and I believe the satisfaction any Man will receive from Reading of it, will abundantly content him for his pains. I hope from what I have observ'd out of him, I may modestly infer, that it is no small reproach to you, our Brethren of the Laity, nay, to our common Christianity, if you do not pay to us that serve at the true Altar, our moderate Portion, with as much cheerfulness as the Jews paid their Typical Priests their far more costly Tithes and Offerings. The

2d. Thing

2d. Thing I would desire of you is, That you would make us reasonable and charitable Allowances for our Infirmities. How can you deny us this, when you consider the *Treasure* we have in *Earthen Vessels*? The *Treasure* we have receiv'd to manage for your use, is an Argument for this: For what advantage can it be to you to run down the Credit of an Order of Men that watch for your Souls? And to do what in you lies to render their Labours ineffectual? Certainly you ought to be far from so doing. Certainly not we alone, but likewise you are interested in the upholding of our Reputation.

But then forasmuch as the *Treasure* we have receiv'd is in *Earthen Vessels*, the Allowance I plead for is but reasonable, and we may justly challenge it of you. 'Tis indeed a very hard case that many of you are so far from making us any allowance, that contrariwise you are ready upon all occasions to aggravate every little Mistake to our Disadvantage, and carry the matter as if we were the most absurd sort of Men in the World, not to be quiet without Fault. You expect to find us Angels, but alas! we are Men; men of like passions with your selves, inclin'd naturally to the like immoralities, follies and indiscretions that other men are. If you are not strangers to the workings of an Evil Nature in your selves, turn your Thoughts inward, reflect upon your own weaknesses, and you may find what Ours are. And what great matter is it then, if even the best of us after all our severities of Mortification, fervent Prayers, and constant Watchings, be sometimes born down by an irregular Appetite that is continually craving, or be overtaken through inadvertency or mistake? Nay, why should it seem strange to you that in so great a Body of Men, labouring under the Diseases of a Lapsed Nature, there should here and there be found some guilty of scandalous Vices. I say here and there, for I hope their numbers are not great. I am far from pleading for such Men: Their guilt must needs be very great, and their condition sad. Let us pray that God would touch their hearts with a sense of their sin and danger, and give them repentance. For howsoever they may conceal themselves from their *Diocessans*, and escape the Penalties of all human Laws, there is a day approaches, when the very worst of

their Case will be known and judg'd. And they will be able to give but a bad account to the only Universal Bishop when at his general Visitation, he will not only enquire, but infallibly find out, how they have behaved themselves in his Church.

But my Brethren, Why should you aggravate matters? Why should you make it your business to spread abroad our Faults, of what number or nature soever? When you know you cannot do it without scandal to Religion, and hazard to the Souls of Men. If you will complain of us justly to our Right Reverend Diocesan, whose Office and Care it is, to do what he can to reclaim us, you have now a fair opportunity, and we cannot blame you: But that you will seldom do; why then, do not expose Us and our Calling together, Do not divulge our Failures in such a way as can do no good but will in all probability do a great deal of harm. Suffer our Mistakes to be as little a prejudice as may be, to the success of our Doctrine and Labours, and have a Care you do not charge the Faults of some few particular Men upon the whole Order.

Lastly, Since we have a very valuable *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, a work of the highest nature and importance upon our hands, and but slender Abilities to perform it, we intreat you, for whom we labour, to help us forward, and to make our Work as easy as may be, by a cheerful Conformity. 'Tis necessary that upon this occasion, I first warn you to beware of False-Teachers, which now adays every where abound, and to keep close to those that are the Successors of the Apostles, the Bishops with their Presbyters, the Stewards of this Heavenly Treasure. *Those we must obey, says Irenæus, who have their Succession from the Apostles: and who with Episcopal Succession have received the Gift of Truth.* But as to other false Teachers he forewarns them of their danger, and consequently how dangerous it must needs be for the People to follow, or be led by them. But my Brethren it is enough for you to beware of false Teachers, I intreat you also to listen to us who, notwithstanding the Infirmities we are subject to, are still your lawful Pastors. It is for you we watch and study. Our Education was so directed and modell'd, as might be most subservient to the Noble

Lib. 4. cap. 43.

Ibid. & cap. 19.

Noble End of promoting your spiritual and your everlasting Interests: And it is our earnest desire and daily study how we may most serve you in your endeavours to walk in all the Paths of vertue and goodness, until you attain to a blessed Immortality. We would gladly direct you the way to happiness, set you right on the brink of eternity, and give you a safe Wastage to the calm Harbour, where you will rest from sin and suffering, and be for ever safe, and for ever happy. Here you live in an evil World full of Temptations, and we are in continual fears lest those of you whom we have conceiv'd good Hopes, should miscarry: But if we can but conduct you safe thorow these Snares and Allurements, and consign you into the Arms of Jesus, there we can leave you with Joy and Triumph. We desire also to walk before you in good works, to be *Examples to our Flocks*: But our Graces are imperfect, and we have our Failings. And we would not that our Errours in Practice should mislead you, Be ye therefore *Followers of us* no further than as we are *Followers of Christ*.

If you constantly attend on all the parts of Publick Worship, adding thereto secret Prayer and holy Meditations, together with the Vertues of a good Life, how happy will you for ever be! And how easy and delightful are our Labours! What a comfort to see the Success of all our Travail! But if a Prophane Spirit prevail amongst you, so as you contemn and neglect holy things, Or are meerly Hearers of the Word, but not Doers of it, how uncomfortable are Employments! We learn from the Apostles words, that we must be to you either *the Saviour of Life unto Life*, or *the Saviour of Death unto Death*: We would gladly be the former, and we tremble to think we should be the latter. We intreat you therefore to labour diligently that our labour and diligence may not be in vain, or to a purpose infinitely more fatal. And as a further means to the making our labours easie, let me recommend to you the early forming of the Minds and Manners of such young People, as are committed to your charge: Instruct them in their Duties, exhort them to what is good, and then be sure to set before them good Examples. Take care likewise that they may come to us, and submit to our instruction, that so they may
be.

be fitted for Confirmation, and the Lords Table. By which means our pains with them, and our solicitude for them, will be less in the after part of their Lives: And you will have contributed very much to the leaving behind you a race of good and useful People; yea, to the entailing of Virtue and Goodness upon the Generations to come; so that great will your reward be in Heaven, and late Posterity shall call you blessed.

Lib, i. γ.

* φιλοσοφία
ἐπιστάτη
σέμνω δ' ἦθει
καὶ βίῳ σώφρε-
νι.

And I pray God, that both we and you may walk together in all the paths of our most Holy Religion, that we may approve our selves to be Christians indeed, and not merely in Pretence. *Herodian* tells us of *M. Antonius*, that he alone of the Emperors ** was a Philosopher*; or as it may be rendr'd, *confirm'd and establish'd Philosophy, not only by words and Notion, but by good Manners, or an honest and decent Conversation, and by a sober Life.* Let the bright Examples of such excellent Heathens prevail with us to give as good Proofs of our Christianity. But we have fairer patterns than his to imitate, and more suitable to the purposes of our most Holy Religion, in the Saints and Martyrs, and especially in that great Exemplar, the ever blessed Jesus, the Captain of our Salvation. Let us therefore all of us endeavour to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes, through all the paths of Faith and Patience, Virtue and Holiness, and at last into those heavenly Mansions, the glorious Regions of endless Happiness. This God grant that we may do, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord; To whom with the Father and ever blessed Spirit be given, as is due, Adoration and Praise, henceforth and for evermore, *Amen.*



F I N I S.

